

Nevada Strategic Planning for Statewide Interoperability

Focus Group 2

**Carson City, NV
June 9, 2005
Follow Up Report**



Executive Summary

The Carson City focus group session on June 9, 2005 provided valuable input from the state and local practitioner perspective for the development of the Statewide Communications Interoperability Strategic Plan. The focus group participants identified the following top four major initiatives to be considered during the upcoming strategic planning session in Las Vegas on September 14, 2005:

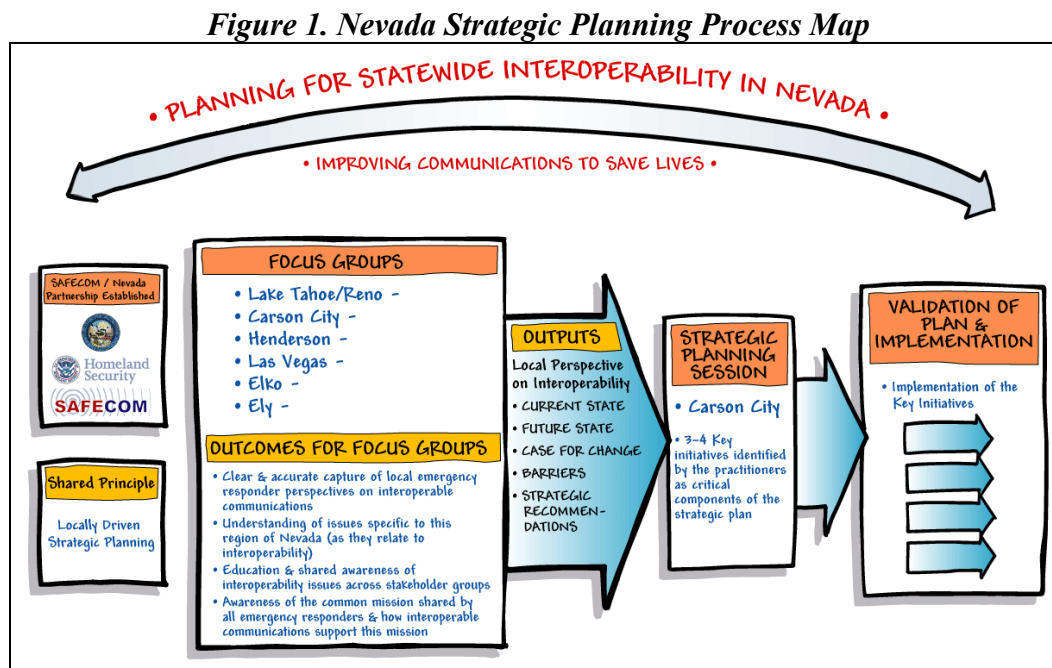
- (1) Identify existing gateways, buy needed new gateways, and fully implement necessary gateway system statewide
- (2) Create a training program that conducts cross-agency training on command and control, NIMS, and disparate systems
- (3) Identify advocates in the local, state, tribal, and federal level who will become champions to secure funding
- (4) Create a single lead group comprised or representative of a broad base of stakeholders with the authority to obtain and expend money without bureaucracy

Introduction

The State of Nevada has established a partnership with the SAFECOM Program to conduct a pilot project that will lead to the development of a communications interoperability strategic plan that includes the input of public safety practitioners. SAFECOM's mission is to serve as the umbrella program within the federal government to help local, state, tribal and federal public safety agencies improve public safety response through more effective and efficient interoperable wireless communications. The involvement of local and statewide emergency responders is essential to the success of developing a Statewide Interoperability Strategic Plan. The Nevada Communications Steering Committee (NCSC) serves as the primary point of contact for these efforts.*

In order to develop a collaborative Statewide Communications Interoperability Strategic Plan, the State has asked SAFECOM to conduct six (6) regional focus group sessions, comprised mainly of informal and formal leaders from fire, law enforcement, and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) departments. Additional representation includes public health, local and state agencies in order to accurately capture local perspectives on the state of interoperable communications in Nevada. In addition to the six (6) focus group sessions, a strategic planning session will also be conducted to validate and build on the inputs from the focus groups.

The following graphic depicts the process by which SAFECOM will bring locally driven philosophy and strategic planning approach to the regional focus groups and strategic planning session.



* The members of the Nevada Communications Steering Committee (NCSC) who participated in this focus group did so in their practitioner or individual agency role. They did not participate as members of the NCSC. No NCSC deliberations were undertaken, nor decisions made.

The outcomes of the focus group sessions are as follows:

- ❑ Clear and accurate capture of local emergency responder perspectives on interoperable communications
- ❑ Understanding of issues specific to this region of Nevada (as they relate to interoperability)
- ❑ Education and shared awareness of interoperability issues across stakeholder groups
- ❑ Awareness of the common mission shared by all emergency responders, saving lives, and how interoperable communications support this mission

Each focus group session is designed as a series of conversations centered on the following issues: interoperability (statewide and regional) as it relates to the current state, the envisioned future state, case for why change needs to happen, barriers to achieving the future state, and recommended strategies to pursue.



Detailed Overview

Current State

The objective of the Current State conversation is to affirm the facts about current interoperability capabilities and needs in Nevada regarding response efforts spanning day-to-day operations up through catastrophic events.

The Carson City focus group identified the following Current State themes specific to communications interoperability in Nevada:

- Locally, agencies are able to cooperate, but difficulties arise when resources must be shared regionally
- When systems fail, practitioners still manage incidents, but with “workarounds” based on institutional knowledge that is passed down through formal and informal networks, and is not sustainable as people retire
- There is not a training program for command and control for multi-agency incidents
- A clear, coherent statewide governance structure does not exist
- In an area that borders 3 different fire regions, there is no plan to use (share?) frequencies
- Interoperability is under-funded and acquisition programs within agencies/local government are not coordinated, impacted by misinformation and vendors, and often not compatible with others because of a lack of shared criteria
- Interoperability is much more of a dilemma for rural counties, which is highlighted by differences in funding (tax base and grants) between urban and rural areas

- Lack of federal government regulatory consistency and direction. Currently, there are five (5) frequency coordination committees recognized by the FCC to perform coordination for states
- Administrators hesitate to make costly investments in interoperability due to lack of understanding about policies, rapidly changing technology, and political ramifications

Future State

The objective of the Future State conversation is to describe the desired future regarding communications among emergency responders in Nevada.

The Carson City focus group highlighted the following elements of the Future State of communications interoperability in Nevada:

- Nevada has an updated statewide communications plan that is appropriately communicated to all stakeholders and there is adequate cross-training and pre-planning across agencies and jurisdictions
- Integrated voice, data, video, GPS is available to public safety practitioners in real time for public safety needs ranging from day-to-day operations to catastrophic events
- There is improved communications by having cooperation and collaboration among all agencies, organized around NIMS
- The State Department of Emergency Management has adequate staff and funding to address interoperability issues so that it works equally for all
- Emergency operations plans are accessible to first responders in real time with secure web access
- There is a single frequency coordinator designated for the state who provides a coordination point within the state for resource management and the FCC has made a decision on spectrum
- Nevada operates with common standards for equipment, technology, and operating policies
- There is a governance structure that is stable, effective, respected, and out lives elected officials

Case for Change

The objective of the Case for Change conversation is to discuss the consequences and implications if changes to Nevada's state of interoperable communications do not occur in addition to the opportunities that may be missed by not changing. The Case for Change statements should appeal to the emotions of individuals and result in action.

The Carson City focus group identified the following elements as part of making a Case for Change:

- Enhancing interoperability will:

- Improve service to the public and sustain Nevada's image as a quality place to live and do business by increasing the capability of first responders to accomplish their assigned missions
- Reduce time to bring help and support to officers and save lives (first responders and citizens) and protect property (personal and public assets)
- Maximize resources by coordinating responses across agencies
- Reduce potential liability
- Help Nevada keep pace with emerging technologies
- Expand lifecycle capabilities without losing compatibility with other agencies
- Building on local capabilities while preparing to expand communications on a regional and statewide level will work as a long-term solution and save money in the short-term on high maintenance costs
- Interoperability will be effective because the system is designed to work, not because of reliance on first responders to be creative and make things work in the time of a disaster

Barriers

The purpose of the Barriers conversation is to identify factors hindering the effort to achieve the Future State.



The Carson City participants identified the following barriers:

- Lack of strategic planning, implementation, and maintenance at the operational and strategic level
- External forces influence decisions that do not make sense or apply to the local communities
- Vendor influence and proprietary systems
- Lack of a common direction, vision, and alignment
- Conflicting and overlapping legal authorities and policies
- Preconceived notions – “We've always done it this way”
- Lack of standardization
- Turf battles and not wanting to give up control
- Different needs both real and perceived
- Lack of adequate funding to support needed resources

Strategic Recommendations

The purpose of the Strategic Recommendations conversation is to identify the fundamental strategic initiatives essential to reach the desired future state, including the completion of the statewide plan and identification of the most important initiatives the state can undertake in the short term.

The Carson City focus group participants identified the following top four (4) critical initiatives to achieve communications interoperability statewide:

- (1) Identify existing gateways, buy needed new gateways, and fully implement necessary gateway system statewide
- (2) Create a training program that conducts cross-agency training on command and control, NIMS, and disparate systems
- (3) Identify advocates in the local, state, tribal, and federal level who will become champions to secure funding
- (4) Create a single lead group comprised or representative of a broad base of stakeholders with the authority to obtain and expend money without bureaucracy

Next Steps

The outcomes from the six (6) regional focus group sessions will drive the upcoming strategic planning session. The key initiatives identified by practitioners across the state will serve as the documented view of the user community detailing their perspective on efforts that will most improve interoperable communications in the State of Nevada. The strategic planning session is scheduled to take place in Las Vegas, Nevada on September 14, 2005.

The SAFECOM/Nevada Partnership is committed to maintaining communications with the participants of each focus group as the planning for statewide interoperability in Nevada progresses. This report details the results of the Carson City focus group meeting and was distributed to the participants on Thursday, June 16, 2005 (a list of focus group participants is included as Appendix A). In addition, the results of the conversations with all six (6) focus groups will be made available to all participants in late July.

Immediate actions participants committed to based on their participation in the focus group include:

- Initiate an effort to get the Navy to talk to the officials in the state
- Coordinate an exercise to test interoperability between Washoe County and Douglas County
- Reach out to others in the public safety community (specifically EMS) to gain more participation for the focus group
- Update frequency plan for the state
- NCSC representatives will notify participants about the upcoming Homeland Security Commission meeting on July 7th to discuss the draft statewide interoperability plan

Appendix A

Participants in the June 9, 2005 focus group meeting, in Nevada's Carson City Area on Nevada's Strategic Planning for Statewide Communications Interoperability:

First Name	Last Name	Division/Department	Phone	Email
Robert	Chisel	Nevada Department of Transportation	775-888-7440	rchisel@dot.state.nv.us
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Stu	Cook	Fire Chief at NAS	775-426-3405	stuart.cook@navy.mil
Dave	Drew	Deputy Chief, East Fork Fire and Paramedic District	775-782-9040	ddrew@co.douglas.nv.us
Eric	Eggen	Nevada Division of Forestry	775-684-2518	eeppen@forestry.nv.gov
Stacey	Giomi	Carson City Fire	775-887-2210 ext. 1005	sgiomi@ci.carson-city.nv.us
Gary	Hames	Fire Chief, Storey County Fire Department	775-847-0954	ghames@storeyfire.com
Craig	Harrison	Washoe County Public Works	775-328-2131	charriso@mail.co.washoe.nv.us
Dan	Holler	Douglas County	775-782-9821	dholler@co.douglas.nv.us
Brian	Jonas	Humboldt County Sheriff's Office	775-623-6419	H102@hcsnv.com
Christopher	Lake	Nevada Hospital Association	775-827-0184	chris@nvha.net
Fergus	Laughridge	State Emergency Medical Service	775-687-3065	flaughridge@ems.state.nv.us
Jim	Lopey	Washoe County Assistant Sheriff's Office	775-328-3328	jlopey@mail.co.washoe.nv.us
Brian	McBeth	Nevada National Guard	775-788-4566	brian.mcbeth@nvreno.ang.af.mil
Jim	Miller	Storey County Sheriff	775-847-0959	jmiller@storeysheriff.us
Terry	Savage	State Department of Information Technology	775-684-5801	tsavage@doit.state.nv.us
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Steve	Silva	Nevada State Parks	775-687-4379 ext. 224	sbsilva@parks.nv.gov
Mike	Smith	LTC NAS Fallon	775-426-4177	michael.j.smith@navy.mil
Jim	Whalen	Douglas County Communications	775-720-3997	jwhalen@co.douglas.nv.us
Bob	Wideman	Department of Public Safety	775-684-4478	bwideman@dps.state.nv.us
Daren	Winkelman	Public Health – Carson City	775-887-2190 ext. 1301	dwinkelman@ci.carson-city.nv.us
Jim	Wood	Churchill County Sheriff's Office	775-423-3116	jwood@cccomm.net
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Appendix B

Graphical Representation of the Nevada Strategic Planning Process

